DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS OF THE LEBANON

By ELIAHU EPSTEIN

THE Lebanese Republic covers an area of about 10,000 sq. k.* The population was last assessed in the Order of the President dated June 17, 1943, as the number of citizens registered in the registration records on December 31, 1942. This Order also referred to a number of Lebanese who had emigrated but had retained their Lebanese citizenship.

The Order in question was published in connection with the elections to the Lebanese Parliament. Although the Moslem communities disagreed with the correctness of the number given, the Order remains the official document pending the holding of a general Census which will determine the figures more precisely.

The following is the table which served as the foundation for fixing the population of the Lebanon as on January 1, 1943:†

Communities.	Inhabitants.	Emigrants.	Total.
Maronites — — — —	518,000	91,276	609,276
Sunni — — — —	195,000	4,953	199,953
Shi'ah — — — —	100,000	2,000	102,000
Greek Orthodox — — —	166,000	33,000	199,000
Druses — — — —	71,711	4,000	75,711
Greek Catholics — — —	61,000	13,000	74,000
Armenian Orthodox (Gregorians)	58,000	8,000	66,000
Minorities — — — —	41,000	2,000	43,000
Total	1,084,411	159,571	1,243,982

The following are the estimated figures for the movement of population in the Lebanon, and the estimated natural increase:‡

Communities.	1932 Census.	End 1943.	Difference.	Percentage.
Sunni — —	179,687	195,000	15,313	8·5
Shi'ah — —	155,153	100,000	44,153	28·5
Druses — —	68,207	71,711	3,504	5·0
Maronites —	463,620	518,000	54,380	11·0
Greek Catholics	55,045	61,000	5,955	10·5
Greek Orthodox	92,000	166,000	74,000	13·0

The instructive conclusions which can be drawn from these tables are:

(a) Most of the emigrants from the Lebanon and those who continue

* Since the demarcation of the Syro-Lebanese Frontier has not been completed, estimates of the area of the two States vary. The area of the Autonomous Sanjak of the Lebanon (1861-1915) was 6,700 kilometres and its population was 400,000.

† "Le Syrie et l'Orient," Beirut, 20-25, 6, 1943.

‡ *Ibid.* The figures in these tables and the statistical calculations should be accepted with extreme caution on account of the backward methods used for demographical statistics in the Lebanon.

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to maintain their Lebanese citizenship abroad are Christians, the over-

(e) The natural increase among the non-Christian population of the Lebanon, and particularly of the Shi'ah and the Druze, is more than twice as great as that of the Christian population. These facts can serve as a key to explain various developments, the influence of which may be decisive in shaping the social character and political fate of the Lebanon.

Any person reviewing the demographic problems of the Lebanon cannot but observe a number of factors common to the Christian population of the Lebanon and the Yishuv (the Jewish community) in Palestine. The natural increase of the Christians in the Lebanon is roughly equal to that of the Yishuv in Palestine.*

Against this, however, the Yishuv in Palestine has incomparably more potential reserve in the way of immigration from abroad than that which is available to the Lebanese Christians through the return of emigrants. And just as the chief concern of Zionism in Palestine is the creation of possibilities for the absorption of fresh immigrants from abroad, so the Christians of the Lebanon are faced first and foremost with the problem of preventing emigration from the country, and, in consequence, the creation of opportunities for absorbing emigrants who do return and who can return to their homeland, given suitable absorptive conditions. In addition, attention is devoted to the creation of opportunities for absorbing Christians who require a refuge.

The absence of dynamic economic resources in the Lebanon which could increase and expand the sources of livelihood for a progressive population has led to a steady emigration from the country since the middle of the last century. This process has chiefly affected the Christians whose requirements are more developed and whose living standards are higher than those of their Druze and Moslem neighbours; it has created a serious social and political problem which, taken together with their lower rate of natural increase, places the future of the Lebanese Christians in permanent danger.

Robert Widmer described the economic reasons for a migration from the Lebanon in the following passage:†

> "Lebanon is over-populated. As has been stated, the density of population is about 93 people to a square kilometre. In view of the topography of the country, its rocky mountains and its thin soil, its scarcity of mineral wealth, and its undeveloped industries, the land cannot support all its people. Consequently it is to be expected that some of them have to emigrate, leaving many dependent on their remittances."

As long as emigration was temporary, it was in many ways advantageous. To the general broadening of outlook resulting from contact with more advanced countries were added the material benefits of an increase in the country's capital (brought in by returning emigrants), an out-

* Pessimism prevails among the Christians of the Lebanon as regards future prospects among the Jews of Palestine.

† S. Himadeh, *Economic Organization of Syria*, Beirut, 1936, p. 14.

9:Lebanon G-3 (1952)1953 MEI Lebanon MEI

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POPULATION DENSITY

Per square mile

Eight villages in project and control area ..... 100 persons per sq mile

For comparison:

LEBANON ..... 300 persons per sq mile

UNITED KINGDOM ..... 500 persons per sq mile

JAPAN ..... 600 persons per sq mile

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9:Lebanon G-5 (1952)1953 ME1 Lebanon ME1

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POPULATION

Each figure represent 1000 people

Total population in five project villages.

total: 5645

Total population in three control villages.

total: 3915

9: Lebanon G-5 (1952)1953 MEI Lebanon MEI

Population

Accurate current population figures are not available for Lebanon. Only one true census has been made since the days when Lebanon was a part of the Ottoman Empire. This census was made in 1932 during the French mandate. It is out of date and so is of little use where present population data are required.

An attempt to establish what the current population is was made in this survey. The basic method was to obtain an estimate by the mukhtar. In all cases his estimate was discussed by other village leaders who were present during the interview and the figure taken was the one the group agreed upon. As the mukhtar is the official government representative in the village, and included among his duties is the registration of births and deaths, he is the best available source for population information. Discussion by other villagers tended to reduce bias and made for as accurate an estimate as possible.

Since the figures obtained from the mukhtar are at best only considered estimates, it was decided to check his figures through a sampling technique. Village residences were counted, a sample of about 15 per cent was selected at random, and a house-to-house inquiry was made to determine the number of persons living in each one of the dwelling units selected. After the average number of persons in a household in the sample was determined, the total village population was derived by multiplying this number times the number of residences.

The results of this sampling can be seen in Table II. It should be noted that they coincide closely to the estimates furnished by the mukhtar. The total population in the project area according to the housing sample is 5,555 while the estimates of the various mukhtars give a total of 5,645. The average size of a household in the five project villages is 6.1 persons.

In light of the close agreement shown between the total population figures achieved by the sample and from the mukhtars, the inclination is to accept such estimates as being reasonably accurate. The results shown Table II are believed to be more reliable than any other available data arrived at to date. It is recommended that the population estimate made by the mukhtars (column 4, Table II) be accepted as correct for use in connection with the Improvement Project.

9:Lebanon G-5 (1952)1953 MEI Lebanon MEI

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TABLE II

Population

Kasmie Rural Improvement Project

Dei'ah	(1) Number of Houses	(2) Average Number of Persons per House	(3) Population Col. (1) x Col. (2)	(4) Population as Estimated by Mukhtar
Project Area				
Sarafand	310	5.5	1705	1800
Saksakiyah	198	5.8	1148	1025
Loubya	59	5.7	336	320
En-Nsariyah	92	7.1	653	800
'Adloun	252	6.8	1713	1700
Sub-total for project villages	911	(Weighted) 6.1	3555	5645
Control Area				
El-Ghaziyah	310	8.3	2573	3200
En-Najjariyah	60	6.1	366	540
El-'Addousiyah	27	6.8	183	175
Sub-total for control villages	397	(Weighted) 7.9	3122	3915
Total	1308	(Weighted) 6.6	8677	9560

17: Tannous S, G-5 (ca. 1947-48)1949 MEI Lebanon MEI

Egypt, Turkey, and Lebanon, it is the agricultural village that is paramount. The Lebanese, it is true, are generally known abroad as a trading people, whose ships have sailed throughout the Mediterranean world since ancient times. But this urban, merchant community has always been backed by the rural community of the Mountain.

In few other countries do we find the village-community type of human settlement so firmly established and so influential in the development of national life as in Lebanon. The village has existed continuously there since ancient times. Despite great upheavals, the farmer of Lebanon has patiently and persistently cultivated the soil, produced his crops, and raised his livestock. He has found in the rugged mountains a refuge from persecution and oppression. He has adapted himself efficiently to the difficult terrain, blasting the rocks and terracing the steep slopes in order to make room for his trees, vines, and grains. Over many centuries of adjustment to his peculiar physical and societal environment, he has succeeded in developing a clearly defined and firmly established way of life. He stands at present as the main pillar of national life in the mountains of Lebanon, the embodiment of a long and rich cultural heritage.

In appraising the significance of the village community in the life of present-day Lebanon, one can readily point out three major contributions. The first of these is biological: the replenishment and revitalization of the population in general, and of the urban population in particular. A study of the development of Lebanon over the past half century reveals clearly that rural areas have been mainly responsible for the building up of the flourishing urban or partly urban centers of Sidon, Beirut, Tripoli, and Zahleh. They have maintained a high birth rate, true to the trend prevailing in all rural areas of the Middle East. Due to a healthful climate and relatively high standards of sanitation, infant mortality has been lower in Lebanon than in the other countries of the Middle East. The result has been a constant stream of vigorous emigrants leaving the villages for urban centers.

Some fifty years ago this population overflow produced such pressure on the limited land and technological resources of

17: Tannous S, G-5 (ca. 1947-48)1949 ME1 Lebanon ME1

Lebanon that it could no longer be absorbed within the country. The village folk had the choice of submitting to a life of poverty or of emigrating abroad, seeking new opportunities and fortunes. The first alternative was incompatible with their cultural heritage. They were mostly independent farm owners, not share croppers; they were awakened by a comparatively high degree of learning; they were exposed to influences of the West; and they had a long history of struggle against great odds, demanding initiative and enterprise on the part of the individual and the group.

Consequently, they resorted to emigration for relief. Some sought opportunities in the urban centers of neighboring Arab countries. They established themselves there as merchants, teachers, publishers, doctors, and as government officials in various capacities. Most of them, however, turned toward the promising New World, north and south. It is estimated that these emigrants, together with the families they have reared, now exceed in number the population resident in Lebanon itself.

Recent estimates put the population of Lebanon at 1.2 million, of whom about 75 percent are rural. There seems to be no slackening in the high rate of increase. The density of population, one of the highest in the world, amounts to about 300 per square mile of total area, and 1,200 per square mile of cultivated area. In the Middle East it is exceeded only by Egypt, which holds the world record with a density of about 2,000 per square mile of cultivated area.

This biological resource of the village community constitutes both a serious problem and a challenge to Lebanon. Emigration possibilities for the surplus population are no longer as readily available as they were prior to a decade or two ago. A realistic, long-range solution lies in the application of an enlightened population policy and developmental program that would result in controlled growth on the one hand, and in the efficient development of the country's natural resources on the other.

The second major contribution of the village community to the country is economic. This is readily apparent and needs little elaboration. Dwellers in the villages are the farming folk of Lebanon. Their agricultural activity is the mainstay of the

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
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twenty degrees of latitude. The desert in Syria is of rock and gravel more than of sand, and there are hills rising above 3,000 feet both north and south of Palmyra; more than a third of the total area of Syria is steppe or desert.

Rivers

The Orontes flows from the northern part of the Biqaa through the lake of Homs (which holds about 260 million cubic yards of water) to Hama and through the Ghab depression to Turkey. The Litani rises not far from the Orontes but flows at first southward and later west through a deep gorge in the Lebanon mountains into the sea between Tyre and Sidon. The Euphrates runs through Syria for about 430 miles and has, as tributaries from the north, the Balikh and the Khabur. It is on the Euphrates and its tributaries that there is the best prospect of developing hydro-electricity and irrigation.

Climate[1]

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Over this diverse scene the temperatures vary in the year from below freezing to above 100°F., and on the same day it is possible to ski near the cedars of Lebanon and swim in the sea at Beirut. The rain, which in most places comes between November and February, varies from almost nothing in the desert to about 40 inches a year in the mountains. In the coastal strip the winters are not severe but there is high humidity and small diurnal variation in the summer and this makes the season seem unpleasant and prolonged. In the mountains the snow lies on the topmost peaks for most of the year and the road from Beirut to Damascus is blocked by snow at times in most winters; in the summer the days are hot but the nights are cool enough to draw up to the mountains most of the inhabitants of Beirut. The plateaux and desert have an inland climate with low humidity and higher extremes of heat and cold. Aleppo has greater extremes than Damascus but in both cities there is a distinction between the four seasons: spring from mid-March to mid-May, summer from mid-May to the beginning of October, autumn in October and early November, and winter from November to March.

The People

S L 161 162

Official statistics showed that in 1951 the populations of Syria and of Lebanon were 3,329,137, and 1,303,941 respectively. Over half the inhabitants are engaged in agriculture, about half a million are nomads, and the rest live in towns. The

[1] See table, below, p. 501.

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chief towns of Syria and their populations are: Aleppo, 339,000 Damascus, the capital, 303,000; Hama, 134,000; Latakia, 90,000; Dair az-Zor, 65,000: of the Lebanon—Beirut, the capital, 247,000; Tripoli, 86,000; Sidon (Saida), 78,800; Zahle, 78,031. The population of each country is increasing by about 2 per cent a year. Between half a million and a million Syrians and Lebanese live abroad, mainly in the Americas and Africa; emigration continues; during 1952 about 100 Lebanese emigrated monthly, most of them to South America.

Religions

RELIGIOUS SECTS AND PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

	Syria		Lebanon	
	Population in 1947	*Seats in 1947*	*Population in 1951*	*Seats in 1952*
Sunni	2,040,908	100	273,125	9
Shiis (incl. Alawis)	447,993	13	237,107	8
Druze	96,641	3	82,268	3
Maronite	14,133	1	377,544	13
Orthodox Greek	144,517	7	130,858	5
Orthodox Armenian	104,925	2	67,139	2
Orthodox Syrian (Jacobite)	43,081	2	4,562	
Catholic (Latin rite)	6,125		4,127	
Catholic (Greek rite)	49,543	2	81,764	3
Catholic (Syrian rite)	17,613	1	5,911	
Catholic (Armenian rite)	17,493	1	14,218	
Catholic (Chaldean rite)	4,991			
Protestants	11,959		12,641	
Nestorians	9,630			
Jews	30,873	1	5,993	
Others			6,684	
Minorities		3		1
TOTAL:	3,043,310	136	1,303,441	44

The language of the great majority of Syrians and Lebanese is Arabic, and they think of themselves as Arabs. There are minorities of race, religion, and language:[1] the Kurds number between 100,000 and 200,000 and are mainly in northern Syria; most of them speak Kurdish but are progressively becoming less and less distinct from the Arabs. The Armenians, who live mainly in the three principal cities, now number about 140,000, although some 20,000 emigrated to Soviet Armenia in the 1940's. Most of them came as refugees from the Turks after the First World War. Other racial minorities are the Turkomans, Circassians, and Assyrians. Most of the religious sects

[1] For further details see A. H. Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World* (London, Oxford University Press for RIIA, 1947).

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SYRIA AND LEBANON

During the recent war there was an expansion of cultivation in Syria as a result of high prices and mechanization. The previous table shows the cultivable and cultivated land in different provinces and the distribution of these areas in 1943.

Little is known about the rate of population growth, but it is believed to be rapid. According to the most recent estimates the total in 1944 was 3,987,012, of which the population of Syria was 2,860,411 and of the Lebanon 1,126,600. The population of Syria was divided as follows:

SYRIA: POPULATION AT END OF 1943

Province	*Total*
Latakia	452,507
Aleppo	870,139
Hama	157,458
Homs	212,424
Hauran	112,842
Damascus	603,889
Euphrates	225,023
Jezira	146,001
Jebel ed Druz	80,128
TOTAL	2,860,411

(This estimate excludes the Beduin, whose number is estimated at 400,000.)

About three-quarters of this total, or about 2·1 million, are rural. The amount of cultivated land per head is 2½ acres, but because cultivation is so extensive the area actually cropped is only some 1½ acres.

Lebanon, by contrast with the dry plains of Syria, is intensively cultivated because of the high rainfall on the coast line; yields per acre are higher, and crops are more diversified, including citrus, olives, bananas; small irrigation schemes have been developed along the coast on the streams from the Mountain. The Lebanon depends for part of its grain supply on Syria, and all the cultivated land is cropped. The cultivated area in 1943 amounted to 1·3 million acres. The total population in 1944 was estimated to be 1,126,600; of this probably about 750,000 are rural, and the amount of cultivated land is about 1½ acres per head.

Grain production in Syria and Lebanon together before 1939 averaged 800,000 tons and rose to about 1 million tons during the recent war.

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East
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CHAPTER V

COTTON IN LEBANON

000 Lebanon is the smallest, the most cosmopolitan, and one of the most progressive countries in the Middle East. Beirut, the capital, is a modern, pleasant summer resort, whose shops are known over the world. Probably this contact with the world through Beirut explains the strong Western influence in the country.

But Beirut is not Lebanon, and tourism and commerce still are minor aspects of the economy, which still is primarily agricultural. The country as a whole has not modernized as much as the cities. The farmers are much more provincial.

BACKGROUND

133 311 The country has limited resources. The total area is less than 4,000 square miles, a third the size of Maryland, and most of it is mountainous. The crop land is limited to the narrow coastal plain which averages only four miles in width, and to the numerous fairly small valleys in the mountains.

● 161 Lebanon always has had a great many more people than its agriculture can sustain. In the past this pressure was relieved by emigration, but restrictions of the past 25 years, at home and abroad, have checked the exodus and intensified the problem. The population is now about 1.2 million.

642 Progress has been encouraged by the government which is admittedly one of the most stable in the Middle East, despite its lack of experience. Lebanon became an independent Republic only in 1943, after the French mandate was ended. It has been remarkably independent and practical and has not allowed itself to become embroiled in nationalistic issues as many of the other Arab states have.

INDUSTRY

493 With few exceptions, industries are small and devoted chiefly to the production of light consumer goods such as matches, rubber goods, soap, furniture, cigarettes, beer, macaroni, biscuits, and olive oil. The two chief basic industries are the Iraq Petroleum Company's Tripoli topping plant and the Chekka cement factory. Other basic manufacturing plants include cotton textiles, glass, and sole leather.

AGRICULTURE

241 Roughly a third of the tilled land is devoted to cereals and the balance to a wide variety of crops—fruit trees, vineyards, vegetables, and a number of industrial crops including cotton. Approximately 15 per cent of this area is left fallow each year.

The western plains receive 20 to 35 inches of rainfall a year, and that only during the winter months. Because of the dry summers, a few of the crops

63:Simmons et al G-8 (1941-1952) 1964
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122 mean temperature at Beirut ranges from 56° to 60° F. in January and February and from 78° to 82° F. in July and August. The corresponding mean maximum temperatures average 63° to 68° F., and 88° to 92° F., respectively; the mean minimum, 48° to 52° F., and 70° to 74° F., respectively. The daily range approaches 10° to 15° F. in the summer and somewhat less in the winter. The relative humidity reaches 70 to 75 per cent during the summer and the winter months, but drops to 61 to 66 per cent in the transition periods. In general, the temperatures in the Bekaa are comparable with those of the littoral region, but the seasonal and the daily fluctuations are greater, while the humidity is lower.

POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Population

161 The population of Lebanon was estimated at about 1,229,500 in 1948, an increase of over 400,000 since the last census in 1932.

162 795 The people are of mixed ethnic origin, although ancient Semitic and Arabic strains predominate in all parts of the country. Lebanon occupies a unique position among the Arab states, in that Christian and Moslem elements are almost equally prominent, both numerically and politically, among the indigenous populations. The official statistics are compiled on the basis of religious affiliations, emphasizing the vital role of the different communities in the life of the State. The Maronites, Catholics who adhere to eastern forms of ritual but have acknowledged allegiance to the Vatican since the 12th century, numbered around 359,200, or almost 29 per cent of the population, in 1948. They represent the largest single group, and are concentrated to a considerable extent in the coastal mountain districts from Tripoli to Sidon. The remaining Christian minorities included about 123,200 Greek Orthodox, 73,400 Greek Catholics, 63,900 Armenian Orthodox, 13,600 Armenian Catholics, 12,000 Protes-

83:Simmons et al G-5 (1941-1952) 1284
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have retained close contact with their homeland, a factor which has had a profound influence on the social and the economic development of the country.

Unlike the neighboring Arab states, Lebanon is a compact territory. The density of population in the four administrative provinces, exclusive of Beirut district, averaged over 300 per square mile in 1948. It was 484 per square mile in Mount Lebanon, 336 in North Lebanon, and 291 in South Lebanon, but declined to 101 in the potentially fertile districts of the Bekaa. About 60 per cent of the inhabitants live under rural conditions in some 2,300 large or small villages. Urbanization has increased progressively within recent years, however, and almost one half of the population is now concentrated within easy access of Beirut. The city, which is not only the capital and the industrial metropolis of Lebanon but the principal port for the Levant states, had a population of 300,000 to 400,000 in 1950. Tripoli, the second largest city and the terminus of the pipeline from the oil fields in northern Iraq to the Mediterranean, had a population of roughly 78,000. Numerous towns in the southern and the central portions of the Lebanon range are popular resorts, with an annual influx of summer residents.

The fact that Beirut has become one of the leading cultural and educational centers of the Near East has stimulated the spread of education in the rest of the country. The literacy rate is consistently higher among the men than among the women: it probably averages from 75 to 90 per cent in Beirut and the neighboring districts of Mount Lebanon and from 40 to 60 per cent in the other provinces. The expansion of education has been influenced by the activity of French, American and other foreign groups, but the division between the different systems has hindered the development of a unified national program. Theoretically, primary education is compulsory, although the facilities are inadequate, especially in the rural areas of the south.

p. 111(A)

83 Simmons et al G-8 (1941-1942) 1954
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and Sidon were roughly comparable. In a series of 1,151 complement fixation tests on miscellaneous human serums sent to the Wassermann laboratory of the University hospital, 7 per cent gave a positive reaction with Q fever antigen.

SUMMARY

Lebanon, formerly one of the French-mandated Levant states, has been an independent republic since 1943. It is a compact territory, with an estimated population in 1948 slightly in excess of 1,220,500 and a density of roughly 300 inhabitants per square mile. Unlike the surrounding Arab countries, the Christian and the Moslem elements of the population are almost equal in collective numerical strength and political importance.

Responsibility for the health of the people resides in the Ministry of Public Health of the Lebanese government, which acts in co-operation with other ministries and numerous philanthropic and religious organizations. The public health and the medical care functions of the Ministry are directed from Beirut. The city is one of the leading medical centers of the Near and Middle East, with two university medical schools and associated hospitals. In 1948, there were 73 hospitals (including sanatoria) in the country, with an aggregate capacity of 5,181 beds, or approximately 4.2 beds per 1,000 population. Eight hospitals were maintained by the Ministry of Public Health, while 56 were conducted under private or philanthropic auspices and 9 by foreign organizations. In addition to the outpatient services of the hospitals, a central polyclinic, 17 rural dispensaries and 4 tuberculosis clinics were operated by the Ministry; a polyclinic by the municipal health department in Beirut; 16 dispensaries by the Lebanese Red Cross; and various units by other organizations.

Water supplies are derived from streams, springs or wells, and are usually abundant in the coastal region but often deficient in the interior. Treated municipal water sup-